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ABSTRACT

Designed to encourage newspaper involvement in adult literacy and to assist in launching newspaper literacy campaigns, this handbook complements the American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation's slide/video media show. The handbook is in five sections: (1) The Challenge; (2) Why Become Involved in Literacy? (discussing personal and social costs, economic and business costs, and the impact on the future of newspapers); (3) Newspapers' Contribution; (4) Press To Read (a newspaper literacy campaign launched in 1986); (5) How To Start Your Newspaper Literacy Program (form a task force, decide extent of effort, and provide a focus: a newspaper workplace literacy program, a community-wide literacy project, or a literacy funding project). Three appendixes include information on literacy resource organizations, literacy resource materials, and state literacy rankings. (SR)

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ANPA *American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation*

Newspapers Meet The Challenge

Literacy Handbook

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PRESS TO READ

Newspapers Meet The Challenge is dedicated to Linda Skover who, as assistant director of ANPA Foundation, worked tirelessly for the cause of literacy.

This handbook was developed to complement the American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation's slide/video media show. Both the handbook and the media show encourage newspaper involvement in adult literacy and are designed to assist in launching newspaper literacy campaigns.

American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation
Box 17407 Dulles Airport
Washington, D.C. 20041
(703) 648-1000

Newspapers Meet The Challenge

Literacy Handbook

Carolyn Ebel Chandler, Ed.D.
Literacy Program Manager

ANPA
FOUNDATION

1987

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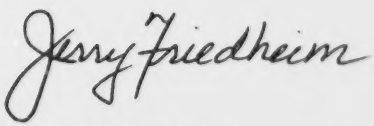
Foreword

North America's newspapers are committed to ending illiteracy, but the industry's effort, and those of individual newspapers and programs, have only just begun to scratch the surface of what can and must be done. The personal and economic cost of illiteracy is simply too high. We in the newspaper industry must realize that the freedoms we enjoy today are very fragile. The choices we make now are the ones on which these freedoms depend. We are beginning to make a difference, but it requires a unity of effort. It requires your effort. We must make reading in North America our number one priority...not just because it's right, but because our future depends on it.



Jerry W. Friedheim
Executive Vice President
American Newspaper Publishers
Association Foundation

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■ WHAT IS LITERACY?

Literacy involves more than recognizing the alphabet, sounding out letters and pronouncing words in a sentence. Literacy involves bringing meaning from the reader to the printed page. Literacy involves applying meaning gained from the printed page successfully to one's life.

There are at a minimum 21 million American adults who do not read successfully. Those who use this figure consider the literacy criterion to be that of a fourth grade reading level. Many put the illiteracy figure at a much higher level, depending upon their personal expectations of American citizens. They ask, can a person who only reads at a fourth grade level survive in our technologically advanced society?

The newspaper industry in particular aspires to a society in which citizens function at a higher than survival level. We want a society that...

- Can read the newspaper.
- Can utilize the information in the hometown newspaper to participate fully in the community.
- Can maintain a democracy by participating responsibly in local and national affairs.

Newspapers are alarmed by recent findings released by the National Assessment of Educational Progress *(Literacy: Profiles of America's Young Adults)*:

- Approximately 20 percent of young Americans between the ages of 21 and 25 read below the 8th grade level.

The Challenge

- Only 19 percent can comparative shop in the grocery store.
- Only 20 percent can figure out a bus schedule.
- Approximately 43 percent cannot use a map to travel from one location to another.

Until the release of the NAEP report, we thought that the illiteracy crisis was concentrated among the older members of the population. Now we can no longer ignore the seriousness of the problem in our young adult population. The link to our future is in danger.

> *"Within the next decade, it is expected that the total number of young adults aged 21 to 25 will shrink from 21 million to 17 million and will be comprised of increasing proportions of minorities.* [According to the report, minority group members are disproportionately underrepresented in middle and high proficiency levels.] *If these population estimates are accurate, there will be a less literate pool of Americans from which colleges, universities, industry and the military will be able to draw to meet their human resource needs. This will occur unless appropriate intervention strategies are developed and implemented to meet the diverse needs of current young adults as well as to promote higher proficiencies among the younger, school-aged populations."* (Literacy: Profiles of America's Young Adults)

Why Become Involved In Literacy?

■ THE PERSONAL AND SOCIAL COSTS

The personal and social costs of illiteracy are devastating. It is difficult for non-readers to travel, and when they do, they encounter difficulties most of us can't even imagine. They can't read traffic signs or street names. They have become prisoners of the streets and neighborhoods they know.

Non-readers cannot choose from a menu at a restaurant or look up a phone number in case of an emergency. They cannot interpret the instructions on a bottle of medicine, risking their own health and that of family members. They cannot follow the progress of their kids in school, help them with their homework, or even read them a bedtime story.

■ ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS COSTS

The personal cost of illiteracy is high. So are the economic and business costs:

- Finding a job, and keeping it, is no easy task for illiterates. As a result, families rely on welfare and unemployment compensation to meet their minimum requirements. This places a direct financial burden on businesses and taxpayers.
- On-site business costs associated with illiteracy include absenteeism, inadequate work performance and wasted time to correct mistakes.
- Crime is high among members of the illiterate population because their options are limited. It has been estimated that 60 percent of all prison inmates are functionally illiterate. Among juveniles the figure is even higher.

Why Become Involved in Literacy?

The growth of illiteracy breaks one of the strongest bonds bringing society together — the ability to communicate, the ability to understand a commonly available body of facts and reach a consensus on policy and action. Illiteracy means the creation of a permanent and growing underclass. Those who cannot read will be unable to participate in the democratic process by exercising their voting rights intelligently. They will become a growing social and economic burden on the literate, with all the potential for disaffection, dislocation, perhaps even violence, that such a division entails. The problem is massive and it is growing every day.

■ IMPACT ON THE FUTURE OF NEWSPAPERS

The newspaper is a document that must be read to be consumed. Articles, editorials, ads and classifieds all have little value unless a person can make use of this information.

A commitment to literacy on the part of a newspaper publisher will result in an increase in circulation through the increase in numbers of readers. It will result in an improved carrier program as well as more carriers to deliver the newspaper. It will lead to a more efficient delivery system and an improved image of the carrier.

Newspapers have reported that many adult carriers have low literacy skills. Often times complaints from patrons are routed by supervisors unwittingly to illiterate carriers who in turn do nothing to satisfy the complaint. Through carriers' involvement in the literacy program, these potential students might come forth more willingly for instruction.

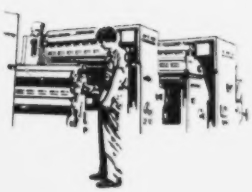
■

Why Become Involved in Literacy?

There are other not-so-obvious rewards to newspapers for establishing a literacy program. There are illiterate and semi-literate employees throughout the newspaper industry. According to *Education Digest*, December 1985, "Basic Skills in the U.S. Work Force," business, school systems and organized labor report writing deficiencies among their high school graduates in secretarial, skilled labor, managerial, supervisory and bookkeeping positions. One corporation reported that over 70 percent of all outgoing correspondence had to be retyped because of errors in grammar and spelling by typists working from dictating machines.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 75 percent of eight million who were unemployed in 1982 lacked the literacy skills prerequisite for on-the-job training.

A company-sponsored literacy program can result in a literate employee who can:



- Understand operation of machinery for efficiency, maintenance and repair.
- Follow directions more accurately.
- Read memos directing better production.
- Understand and participate in company/employee projects such as Blood Bank, insurance benefits, etc.
- Read signs that encourage participation in employee organizations.
- Understand instructions for personal safety.

Illiterate employees have built protective shells around themselves over the years. Such employees avoid change in order to stay secure. And change is a key to the future of newspapers.

■ HOW CAN NEWSPAPERS HELP?

Newspapers can serve as a highly visible motivating force for the general public.

Newspapers have both *business expertise and resources* to lend to the local literacy efforts, whether this be in the form of promotions, financial expertise or actual monies.

Newspapers know the community and are respected by all the factions of the community. Newspaper staffers can pick up the phone and make important *contacts* for literacy groups.

Newspapers can be of help in evaluating literacy programs from a business and societal point of view. They can lend their writing and public relations expertise to schools to translate educational findings into appropriate public bulletins.

Finally, the newspaper itself is a *reading curriculum* that can't be surpassed. It is timely, has something of interest to everyone and can be used for all reading levels. The newspaper curriculum is a reflection of all that is happening in the community. It encourages responsible participation in society.

ANPA Foundation's PRESS TO READ newspaper campaign was launched in the summer of 1986 to support the efforts of public and private adult literacy programs. For 25 years, ANPA Foundation has acted as a clearinghouse for ideas in the Newspaper in Education program. Seven hundred newspapers participate in NIE, providing reduced price copies of their newspapers to thousands of school systems across the country. Teachers now use the newspaper to teach all subject areas. The PRESS TO READ campaign is a logical extension of the NIE program to the adult population.

The slogan PRESS TO READ was carefully chosen to signify the spirit of the newspaper effort, to state publicly that newspapers were committing themselves to action to find solutions to the problem of illiteracy.

We in the newspaper industry will press ourselves within our own newspaper offices. We will press others, including educational and business organizations, to join us. And we will press the nonreader to enroll and stay enrolled in classes.

How to Start Your Newspaper Literacy Program

*FIRST...*Form a Task Force

The first step you'll want to take is to form a task force within your own newspaper building. You'll want to include decision-level persons from all departments as well as those from employee relations, community services and the Newspaper in Education program. The purpose of such a task force is to:

- Create awareness among employees and managers of the newspaper's concern about and commitment to the literacy issue.
- Provide opportunities for employees to become involved in community service.
- Act as a guiding force in the company's literacy efforts.

*SECOND...*Decide the Extent of Your Initial Literacy Efforts

- While your personal interest in the literacy movement will be a prime factor affecting the extent of your involvement, you'll want to consider available manpower, monies to be invested and the severity of the problem in your community.
- Do you want to focus your initial efforts on what can be done within the newspaper through editorials, news articles, ads and/or the Newspaper in Education program? Do you want to become a catalyst in organizing the community, through a project such as a banquet, to assemble educators, businessmen and volunteers?

- Do you have the resources and interest to work toward a multifaceted program that stretches in all directions? You can become a community spokesperson for literacy through public appearances and speeches, flyers and brochures. You might organize new volunteer reading programs both within and outside the newspaper and seek funding to aid groups working with illiterates. You will become an important link to both the public school system and to private literacy groups.

THIRD...Provide a Focus

Now it's time to narrow your literacy efforts to one project focus. As the idea catches on and as success is experienced by employees, you'll win converts to expand your efforts.

Here are three potential areas to consider:

- A workplace literacy program.
- A community-wide literacy program.
- A literacy funding project.

■ A WORKPLACE LITERACY PROGRAM

Background

Overall, about 15 percent of persons in the work force are functionally illiterate. Even among professional and managerial workers, 11 percent are functionally illiterate, as are 29–30 percent of semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

How to Start Your Newspaper Literacy Program

An estimated 75 percent of the currently unemployed are functionally illiterate.

Welfare and unemployment compensation costs that result from illiteracy are estimated at $6 billion annually.

You can educate non-readers at your newspaper and develop a corps of literacy volunteers to assist in the program. You might consider providing released time for training employee tutors. Contact literacy volunteer groups in the community to provide the training.

How to get started:

- Develop a newspaper employee tutoring committee.
- Screen the American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation's slide/video tape show, "Newspaper Literacy Efforts." It is important that this be done company wide, perhaps during a brown-bag lunch.
- Invite public school adult education, Literacy Volunteers of America, Laubach Literacy and other literacy providers to share their programs with the tutoring committee.
- Encourage adult illiterate students to give testimony.
- Ask for a confidential survey of employees needing help.
- Distribute an announcement to all employees of meetings scheduled for volunteer trainers and students. The purpose of the meetings is to discuss literacy programs and opportunities for volunteering. Pass out a card to be returned if the employee needs tutoring or wants to

volunteer as a tutor. Be sure to involve the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) where available.

- Once the task force is established, do high-profile promotion in house.
- Begin classes:

1. Hold classes on the work site. In the beginning, employees may prefer to meet off-site to protect their identities.
2. Develop a "buddy" system to engage fellow workers in a journey to literacy.
3. Make use of current, printed job communications for the reading class: memos, signs, posters, newsletters, bulletins, etc.

Once a carefully planned program is under way, it will provide its own built-in rewards.

Here's what some businesses that have successfully implemented literacy programs have to say — as reported in The Washington Times:

"The program was tailored to fit the employee. Remember, it's a very scary thing for these people. Most are real shy about this. So we did a lot of different things to make sure we were giving them the proper nudge." *(The Washington Gas Light Co., Washington, D.C.)*

"We just tell them that the jobs are always changing, that the job requires more reading and writing than it used to. The only thing that holds them back is the embarrassment. They come right out and tell us that." *(J.P. Stevens Co. Inc., textile plant, Stuart, Va.)*

"We're really tickled with it [the program]. It helps employees be more mobile as far as changing jobs in the plant but it does take management to be behind it all the way." *(J.P. Stevens Co.)*

A COMMUNITY-WIDE LITERACY PROGRAM

Another literacy project to consider is one that is community wide. Such projects contribute toward the development of community literacy resources and cooperation. Other businesses are encouraged to participate side-by-side with newspapers.

How to get started:

- Identify and meet with literacy providers such as adult basic education, literacy volunteer, senior citizen and service organization groups. Discuss community literacy needs with these groups. Target your newspaper program to these needs.
- Introduce the topic of literacy throughout the newspaper—in editorials, features with experts and with illiterates, in the sports, style, classified sections, and through public service announcements and regular news holes for literacy events.
- Create a weekly page for adult students. This should be low-level reading material that does not necessarily require a tutor but is of high interest to beginning readers: fashion, drugs, cosmetics, trends, news stories and publications of student work. Consider sponsoring a local or

statewide literacy newsletter using newspaper writing expertise and in-house office equipment to produce the newsletter.

Here are some suggestions for promoting a community-wide literacy program:

- Establish a "hotline" with referral for services.
- Establish a speakers bureau.
- Compile a local literacy directory.
- Enroll other companies in the community to sponsor a reading tutor, through honorariums, materials or other incentives.
- Serve as a clearinghouse of information on literacy.
- Sponsor a benefit for organizations involved in literacy.
- Sponsor a party to show appreciation.
- Create promotion ideas, such as bookmarks, book covers, library cards, posters and T-shirts.
- Adopt a school.
- Produce or provide slide shows.
- Provide award certificates of recognition for tutors and students.
- Award a three-month newspaper subscription to every graduate of literacy classes.
- Establish a literacy week.

A LITERACY FUNDING PROJECT

Corporate giving by newspapers or other groups means giving money and/or support to literacy programs. Newspaper companies can play a strong leadership role in the com-

munity as fund-raisers and catalysts to encourage other corporations, foundations and individuals to give or generate funds.

Newspapers can advocate support for literacy programs from state and private sources. They can create special fund-raising events. They can convene groups of funders, such as corporations and foundations, to inform them of the literacy issue and its significance to the community. They can sponsor literacy providers to help coordinate services and improve program quality.

Some suggestions for fund-raising activities:

- Encourage appropriate local persons to lobby for state funding of on-going literacy projects.
- Assist in creating a committee outside of the newspaper to oversee disbursement of funds.
- Initiate an employee contribution system.
- Encourage companies to match employee and/or outside donations.
- Challenge other businesses and media, through the use of editorials, to develop their own fund-raising projects to match or exceed the newspaper's donations.
- Sponsor a yard sale and include books donated by the local library as well as ones donated by individuals.
- Sponsor a book fair in which a local book store donates a percentage of sales to the program.

- Sponsor an awareness dinner for local VIPs in businesses, education or politics. A per-plate charge could be donated by the newspaper.
- Assist the literacy council in forming its own on-going fund-raising committee.
- Give a child a book for Christmas or Chanukah. Books could be donated by the community, book store, businesses, school systems, etc.
- Hold a 24-hour read-a-thon where local students gather in a mall to read for 24 hours. Phones should be set up to accept donations.
- Adopt-a-tutor. Local businesses pay for training and additional expenses incurred by either student or tutor.
- Seek donations of supplies or equipment from businesses for the program.

Once your project is off the ground there is still much work to be done. You'll want to:

- Enlist the aid of outside resources for publicity material.
- Promote the literacy program in the company newsletter.
- Develop a recognition and incentive program.
- Establish goals, schedules, a timetable and review procedures.
- Work to change attitudes about adult illiteracy within the newspaper office.
- Make regular progress reports to employees.

Appendix A

LITERACY RESOURCES
(Compiled by the El Paso Herald-Post)

Organizations

American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation
Box 17407 Dulles Airport, Washington, DC 20041
Carolyn Ebel Chandler, Literacy Program Manager
(703) 648-1000

The ANPA Foundation employs a full-time administrator for literacy projects. The organization offers a wealth of resources to newspapers, including on-site workshops and presentations; a monthly newsletter, "PRESS TO READ"; this handbook for starting a newspaper literacy project; a slide/video presentation; and other essential data, including state-by-state breakdowns of illiteracy statistics.

Contact Literacy Center
P.O. Box 81826, Lincoln, NE 68501-1286
(800) 228-8813 — (402) 464-0602

This is the national literacy hotline to provide referral services for both students and volunteers. You can call this number for the instructional program in your community.

Adult Performance Level Project
Education Annex, Room 2.212
University of Texas, Austin, TX 78712
Jim C. Cates, Director
(512) 471-4623

The project does research and curriculum development in the field of adult education.

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education
1201 16th St. NW, Suite 230, Washington, DC 20036
Judy Koloski, Executive Director
(202) 822-7866

This is a professional association with 7,000 members involved in adult and continuing education. The association provides information about illiteracy and administers educational programs.

American Library Association
Office for Library Outreach Services
50 East Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611
Roger Parent, Deputy Executive Director
(312) 944-6780

The association is a 40,000-member education organization promoting library programs, including basic English.

Appendix A

American Society of Newspaper Editors
P.O. Box 17004, Washington, DC 20041
Lee Stinnett, Executive Director
(703) 620-6087

The ASNE has formed a literacy committee made up of 15 concerned newspaper editors. The editors have been meeting regularly and are producing an ASNE literacy packet to be sent to all ASNE members. The committee also is forming a literacy speakers bureau. The committee's long-range goal is to increase awareness among newspaper editors of illiteracy and unused literacy.

Association for Community Based Education
1806 Vernon St. NW, Washington, DC 20009
C.P. Zachariadis, Director
(202) 462-6333

The association provides information and technical assistance to 55 colleges and community-based education organizations. It also provides loans and mini grants.

Business Council for Effective Literacy
1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020
Gail Spangenberg, Vice President
(212) 512-2415

The private foundation disseminates information, sponsors meetings and seminars and provides professional advice and technical assistance aimed at increasing corporate awareness and involvement in adult literacy. It has a great deal of literacy material available.

Cartoonists Across America International Humor Advisory Council
Fragments West
3908 East Fourth Street, Long Beach, CA 90814
Philamer Tambio-Yeh
(213) 439-4166

Cartoonists Across America is a group of cartoon artists and writers who have traveled throughout North America promoting literacy through humor and cartoons. In order to fund these efforts, the International Humor Advisory Council has been formed. IHAC has published a source book which shows how humor can be applied to health, business and education. Members of the cartoonists group have published comic books dealing with the illiteracy issue.

The Center for the Book
Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20540
John Y. Cole, Director
(202) 287-5221

The private organization aims to promote books, reading and the written word. The center is working to promote the Year of the Reader throughout the country. This project supplies resource materials suggesting monthly thematic activities surrounding reading.

Appendix A

Clearinghouse on Adult Education
Division of Adult Education Services, U.S. Department of Education
ROB 3, Room 5610
400 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20202
Paul Delker, Division Director
(202) 245-0691

The clearinghouse is part of the U.S. Department of Education and provides referral information and reference services in the area of adult education.

Coalition for Literacy
c/o College of Agriculture/Extention Education
University of Illinois - Urbana
Urbana - Champaign, IL 61801
Dr. Violet Malone, Chair
(217) 333-1132 — (800) 228-8813 (Hotline, Lincoln, NE)

This coalition of 11 organizations is sponsoring a three-year, three-part literacy program involving a national campaign to focus attention on adult illiteracy in the U.S. and solutions at the local level.

International Reading Association
P.O. Box 8139, 800 Barksdale Rd.
Newark, DE 19714
Ronald Mitchell, Executive Director
(302) 731-1600

The association is a professional organization of psychologists, researchers and classroom reading teachers. IRA sponsors conferences and publishes four journals, monographs, brochures and other information.

Laubach Literacy Action
P.O. Box 131, 1320 Jamesville Ave.
Syracuse, NY 13210
Peter Waite, Executive Director
(315) 422-9121

Laubach is a volunteer organization, with 50,000 tutors in 600 communities. The organization disseminates literacy information and publishes a quarterly newspaper.

Literacy Volunteers of America
5795 Widewaters Pkwy., Syracuse, NY 13214
Jinx Crouch, Executive Director
(315) 445-8000

LVA works at the national, state and local levels to set up independent local programs and train volunteer tutors. The organization develops and publishes tutor manuals and other related materials. The organization can help you establish tutoring programs in your community and disseminate information on literacy. A slide show, "Together We'll Open The Door," is available.

Appendix B

AVAILABLE LITERACY RESOURCE MATERIAL

Literacy: Profiles of America's Young Adults. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Educational Testing Service, Rosedale Road, Princeton, NJ 08541. (800) 223-0267, $14.00. Also available; *The Subtle Danger: Reflections on the Literacy Abilities of America's Young Adults,* $8.00; *Learning to be Literate in America,* $4.50.

Newspaper Literacy Efforts, a literacy slide/video show. ANPA Foundation, Box 17407 Dulles Airport, Washington, DC 20041, $50 slide show; $40 video ½".

Opening Doors to a Wider World: A Testament from El Paso. An El Paso Herald-Post handbook. American Society of Newspaper Editors, The Newspaper Center, P.O. Box 17004 Dulles Airport, Washington, DC 20041, $2.25.

Showcase of Newspaper Literacy Projects. A descriptive listing of newspaper literacy efforts nationwide. ANPA Foundation, Box 17407 Dulles Airport, Washington, DC 20041, no charge.

Where Stands the Republic? A Warning and a Challenge to the Nation's Press. Cox Newspapers, Director of Communications, P.O. Box 105720, Atlanta, GA 30348, no charge.

Appendix C

*STATE LITERACY RANKINGS

The state with the highest literacy ranking (Utah) has the highest percentage of persons who have completed eighth grade.

1 Utah
2 Alaska
3 Nevada
4 Wyoming
5 Washington
6 Colorado
7 Oregon
8 Montana
9 Idaho
10 Massachusetts
11 California
12 Nebraska
13 Arizona
14 Michigan
15 New Hampshire
16 Ohio
17 Kansas
18 Delaware
19 District of Columbia
20 Connecticut
21 Hawaii
22 Indiana
23 Maine
24 Iowa
25 Vermont
26 Minnesota
27 Maryland
28 Florida
29 New Jersey
30 Oklahoma
31 Wisconsin
32 Pennsylvania *(tie)*
New Mexico *(tie)*
33 New York
34 Illinois
35 Rhode Island
36 Virginia
37 Texas
38 South Dakota
39 Missouri
40 Georgia *(tie)*
North Carolina *(tie)*
41 Louisiana
42 Alabama
43 North Dakota
44 South Carolina
45 Mississippi
46 Arkansas
47 West Virginia
48 Tennessee
49 Kentucky

*These rankings are based upon 1980 U.S. census data interpreted (1986) by Release Publications, Woodhaven, N.Y.

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